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UNDER THE BAN

IT IS IMPORTANT TO US THAT THE VOICES OF TRANS PEOPLE FROM RUSSIA CONTINUE TO BE HEARD

This is the second edition of a zine with personal stories about discrimination against trans people in militant Russia. We released the first edition a year ago and a month after its publication, in November 2023, the Russian authorities declared LGBT people an extremist movement. Police raided friendly clubs, domestic violence increased in homes, and a nervous atmosphere of hostility and mistrust grew in society. Of course, the persecution of LGBT people is explained by the protection of family values, and the stories we collected during the monitoring are clear evidence of the cynicism of this approach. But they also show us the resilience and hope that trans people retain within themselves.

A little earlier, in July 2023, medical and legal transition was completely banned in Russia. The cases included in this zine span the period from that ban until the end of 2024. It may seem like Russia has always been an unfriendly place for LGBT people, and in many ways it is, but before this ban, trans people in Russia had access to one of the most progressive legal gender recognition procedures in Europe for several years. Everything changed very quickly, and for many people it was a huge blow to their lives, safety, relationships with the outside world, dreams and future. It reminds us again of the fragility of human existence: many trans people in Russia have had to change their lives significantly against their will, some have had to flee their homes, and others have found cruelty in people closest to them.

What do we do to counter this all-pervasive fragility? We find refuge in togetherness, in supporting each other and in maintaining a kind heart. Most of us seem to know how important it is to speak up and be heard when something bad (and good) happens to us. It is also nice to be with someone, sharing their experience with them. In essence, this is what makes us human.

That is why it is important for us that the voices of trans people from Russia continue to be heard. We invite you to witness their stories.

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WHEN I HEARD THAT THEY WERE RUNNING AFTER ME, I WAS OVERCOME WITH UTTER PANIC

01. My husband and I were walking from the bakery, it was getting dark, the sunset was warm. We were walking with the dog and discussing ordinary everyday topics - what to buy for home, where to go. Several men started pestering me. At first they perceived me as a girl, then apologized and addressed me in a male form. I did not answer and walked on. As a result, they started shouting threats after me, then ran after me. A man stopped them, essentially caught them.

When I heard that they were running after me, I was overcome with utter panic. I was ready for a fight, but I still felt scared, my heart started beating faster, my hands started shaking. I had encountered similar things before, but because everything happened so quickly, I did not have time to get my emotions under control.



After what happened, I did nothing, came home devastated and tired, told my friends in search of support and remembered this incident for a long time.

I would like such situations to not happen in principle, when two adult men start running after you because of your ambiguous appearance.

Boris, non-binary transmasc¹,
Saint Petersburg



BB

THE TAXI DRIVER STOPPED ABRUPTLY AND STARTED CALLING HIS "BROS"

02. I was stopped at border control at the airport - I hadn't had time to change my documents, so a bearded young man was walking with a female passport. I had to go through an additional check and explain to the airport staff that I was a trans* person². Surprisingly, they quickly understood this and were pretty kind — they asked if I would soon change my documents. When I said that not soon — in connection with current events, they were sincerely surprised: what's stopping me? I had to give them a lecture about the law banning³ transition⁴.

In November 2023, another unpleasant situation happened - I was riding with my partner, a cis man⁵ in a taxi. It was clear from our conversation that we were part of the LGBT community, and I was a trans* person (I am quite open about this). At some point in the middle of the journey, the taxi driver also realized who he was driving, stopped abruptly, started making up stories about the stench from us in the car, and tried to drop us off in the middle of the highway.

1. A transmasculine person is a person making a transition to the masculine side. Many people use the abbreviation "transmasc", which is more of a slang term.

2. There are different spellings of terms such as "trans man", "trans woman", "trans person".

The asterisk (*) means that this is an umbrella term that includes different gender identities.

Another interpretation is that the asterisk implies that we are talking about non-binary people as well. Each person chooses the spelling that is closer to them.

3. Transition/trans transition/transgender transition are actions that trans people take to bring different aspects of their lives in line with their gender identity.

4. The law banning transition in Russia was adopted in the summer of 2023 and came into force on July 24. After its adoption, it became impossible to change the gender marker in documents, and medical aspects of the transition became possible only unofficially.

5. Cisgender/cis means woman/cis person is a person whose gender identity corresponds to the sex assigned at birth.

We were surprised and asked why he didn't immediately notice the stench when we got in. I honestly didn't understand what was going on and offered to pay the taxi driver extra to take us.

The taxi driver stopped abruptly and started calling his "bros". At that moment, I realized what was happening. My partner and I had to call the police, they came, but they didn't take it seriously enough — they simply wrote down our and the taxi driver's details, dispersed the taxi driver and his "bros", and we were left waiting for a new taxi.

Robert, 24, trans*man,
Moscow

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SHE ACTED AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED

03. My mother beat me up. First, a week before, she tried to stare at my chest really hard. She used to lift my shirt up (when I was 11-14) to make sure I was wearing a bra (on the street too, and of course, without asking), and this time before school she just came up to me, started yelling, lifted my shirt up and started hitting me in the face. She left me a scar. My grandmother was also nearby, saying that it was all my fault.

I felt, of course, not very good, but I was more offended and disgusted than scared. (Luckily, self-defense is in my blood.) After that I went to school. At school, I told my friends everything and they hid my trans stuff for a while in case my mother would rummage through it.

When she came home from work, she acted as if nothing had happened. After that, almost every week I heard that I was a loser, that I was a bitch, that she should have gotten rid of me 17 years ago, that I was a disgrace to the family, and in general "I do this to piss her off." Now she has completely forgotten about everything, but when I don't respond to my deadname⁶ (which is not even written in my passport anymore), all these names fly again.

K, 18, male, Lipetsk region

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33 I STILL HAVE NIGHTMARES ABOUT HOW THEY WOULDN'T LET US BOARD

04. It all started in March 2023, when I was called to school about my son's "inappropriate" behavior. It turned out that he was showing and messaging to his classmates the pictures that allegedly promoted LGBT. These pictures were just random memes with rainbows and a screenshot from the cartoon "Gravity Falls" with a gnome vomiting a rainbow. It was so ridiculous that I just nodded my head, okay, he won't do it again, and I forgot about the situation... Until a couple of weeks later I was called to the juvenile affairs commission for the same reason. I went there still without much fear, rather with irritation - such idiots can't sit there! — but the commission appealed not so much to the pictures as to my transgenderism.

6. Deadname is a name given to a trans person at birth. Many trans people are sensitive to being addressed by it.

How this became known for them is a separate issue. Since I was not charged in the case of "LGBT propaganda"⁷, it was clearly not from my social media, and I have only one idea. When I went through the psychological, medical and pedagogical commission with my children regarding their dysgraphia and dyslexia, I was literally forced to indicate my previous data. Seems like there was a leak of confidential information, which I was afraid of from the very beginning, although I was assured that this would not happen.

Returning to the commission, the following phrases I heard there: "How can you counteract the involvement of children in extremist communities when you yourself belong to them?", "Let us limit your rights until you fix this, in which case we will return your rights to you in six months" and "When the trial is scheduled, you will be notified". Any parent will understand that I left there almost panicking. I had no way to leave quickly, I didn't even have international passports for the children, I had no money or connections to sort everything out.

I had no illusions that everything would resolve itself, I immediately understood that I needed to leave as soon as possible if I didn't want to lose my children, but I didn't know how. We had literally just moved from Bashkortostan to the Leningrad region, and this took all my resources.

For some time I was simply in a panic, having no idea who to turn to and who to ask for help. I was not an activist and did not think that the community would help me, so I first tried to find a lawyer. Out of four, not a single one showed optimism about the outcome of the case. One almost yelled at me on the phone: "I am a respected lawyer, I don't work with people LIKE YOU! It was time to take you on! Run abroad while they let you out!" — and I realized that I really needed to run away.

I managed to run away in the end, but since we are talking about discrimination, I will also mention the difficulties with the children's documents: when applying for their passports, they were refused twice due to "unproven relationship" with me. A certificate of change of my data, which I previously had been used everywhere, from schools and hospitals to social security, was no longer enough.

I still managed to successfully complete the documents, but I still had to leave! Authorities warned me that with such a certificate airport staff might not let me go abroad, they might turn me away right at the airport, and I was very afraid of this.

7. In 2013, Russia adopted a law on the so-called "LGBT propaganda" among minors; in 2022, it began to apply to everyone.

I still have nightmares about the airport and how they wouldn't let us board, perhaps because at that time we had to run away not only from juvenile affairs commission, but also from my parents, who decided that now was the time to take the grandchildren away from a pervert like me, without waiting for the authorities. My son told me later that I passed through customs and passport control very calmly, with a "stone face".

In fact, my face just cramped up, I didn't feel it, and at some point, when we were detained longer than the family that passed before us, I was sure that I was about to vomit from fear. I couldn't believe that this horror was behind us, even when we landed in Istanbul, which became our transit point, and I still sometimes can't believe it. I am too small a person to get out of so many obstacles that even with all the help and support it seems like a miracle to me. And it really is a miracle.

I would like to advise everyone who is in the Russian Federation now, and especially trans people with children, to at least prepare documents in case of emergency evacuation. At most leave without waiting for an urgent need. It is not safe there, and you never know where trouble will come from.

Yaroslav Prutsakov, 37, trans man,
Leningrad region



LIVING WITH THE "WRONG" DOCUMENTS IN RUSSIA IS PUNISHABLE BY CRIMINAL LAW

05. Having read enough stories from other trans people, I understand the insignificance of mine, but I still would like to tell it here. It was early to mid-August [2024], I was working as usual, my girlfriend (she is a cis girl) was studying as usual. We did not live together, since we simply did not have money to rent an apartment. One day, I was calmly sitting out the remaining minutes until the end of my shift, and then my girlfriend wrote me a very scary message for both of us: "Mother saw you."

To clarify, it is worth noting that I started dating my current girlfriend before I started transitioning, and my parents knew me differently and under a different name. As soon as I started hormone replacement therapy, as soon as I changed my documents, I no longer saw her parents, and for a long time they did not know that I had actually been going by a different name and living under a different passport for a year and a half. My girlfriend did not want to tell them about me, because she knew that their reaction would be radically negative, and their actions unpredictable.

The quarrel did not last long. Her father wanted to "talk" to me, but neither my girlfriend nor I allowed him to do this. He accused me of cheating, called me names, misgendered me, deadnamed me and many other things in correspondence with me. He said that living with the "wrong" documents in Russia is punishable by criminal law, and for a long time insisted that I should leave his daughter alone regardless of my or her wishes, and that I myself was obliged to start dating a guy, and that they would find a guy for their daughter.

The worst thing for me was that I couldn't help my girlfriend in any way, I couldn't protect her from those she lived with. She argued with her parents for a long time, and they cried in front of her, saying that they didn't expect such a setup. It all ended with her being given a choice: either she moves from home, or leaves me...

Now we live together, different people have helped us. Even my mother consoled us, although my relationship with her is strained. My girlfriend barely communicates with her parents, mostly only with her brother, who, despite the transphobic and homophobic statements before, protected her from her parents, consoled and supported her, and now has changed his views, most likely. My story can't be compared with others here, but maybe at least someone can hope for the best!

Ulyana, 21, trans girl,
small town near Moscow

THEY START LOOKING AT YOU DIFFERENTLY, AS IF YOU DID SOMETHING BAD

06. I was faced with finding a place to live. I am on the HRT*, my pass⁹ is excellent, but I didn't change my documents¹⁰. At first, everything seemed fine. But when you get to signing the lease agreement — at this point you have to out yourself and reveal documents. After that, they start looking at you differently, as if you did something bad. I suspect that landlords are simply afraid to rent housing to a trans person. Three rental deals collapsed before I managed to find a place (more expensive and further away).

Every time you have to go through this humiliating procedure of outing and showing documents not only when renting an apartment, but also in any situation, from passing through a checkpoint to buying cigarettes. They don't believe you, they accuse you of fraud and document forgery.



8. HRT is a hormonal therapy that trans people use as a part of their medical transition.

9. Passing is a person's ability to be perceived in the desired gender. A "good pass" for a trans man means he is read as a man.

10. Before the law banning transition, trans people could change the gender marker on their documents after passing a special commission.

I'm currently looking for a job and I'm facing the same problems I faced when looking for a place to live. Sometimes it's just dangerous to reveal your documents. I'd like to be able to at least change my documents so I don't have to tediously explain to any random person who blankly looks at your documents what kind of animal you are.

Ideally, of course, it would be great if society were totally tolerant and there was no difference between a trans person and a cis person, but that's probably not the case. But even living in hiding, without raising the issue of the contents of my pants with those who are not directly concerned, is now impossible.

D, 25, trans man,
Moscow



"I WON'T HELP YOU, AND NO ONE WILL HELP YOU HERE"

07. I went to the clinic, to the psychiatrist near my house. I told him about things that bothered me. To which he answered, that he doesn't see anything wrong and won't help. I tried to clarify, but received the following: "I won't help you, and no one in Yekaterinburg will help you." I was so devastated. I couldn't believe that the doctor I turned to for help was saying such a thing. When I came home, I just burst into tears, and in my head there was only one thought, that it would have been better if I had died then.

Anna, 22, trans girl,
Yekaterinburg



I JUST GAVE MY SURNAME WITHOUT THE LAST "A"

08. After three years of trying, I managed to get into a university to major in design. It would seem to be a creative environment, a large city, a commercial university. At first, the teachers even addressed me by my chosen name... But by the end of the first month, someone wrote a report on me. I know exactly who wrote it. This woman did not even teach us, she just organized testing for addiction propensity. I gave her my surname without the last "a"¹¹.

¹¹ Many Russian surnames are based on the principle that adding the letter "a" to the end of a man's surname makes it female and vice versa.

I did not attach much importance to her look then, but two days later I was called to the dean's office with my passport. She made me read my full name out loud, corrected every verb from my lips, every word that could be given a gendered connotation, accused me of misleading people, of damaging documents — a class journal that I had not even touched. I was scared, mumbled once as written and refused to repeat. I was wildly angry, burst into tears. The other people in the office did nothing. In the end, she suggested dealing with the dean. Not actually suggested, she yelled at me. I said: "Ok," and she told me when to come.

I did not go back to class that day — first to the third floor, where there was a common toilet. Naturally, I did not go to the women's, and I did not stick my nose into the men's for reasons that the cis guys might be embarrassed by my presence. I smashed my knuckles against the wall and sobbed. I could not get up, my legs were weak, and my body was shaking from anger and misunderstanding.

I came to the dean the next day. The dean was late. I was standing with a friend who decided to support me. The woman who was present at the first "conversation" arrived with the dean. They decided to hush up the conflict. Like, you don't need this. For half an hour they just told me how I should come to the university and tell everybody about myself "I'm a girl, I'm a girl." A classmate took me by the elbow. They didn't even let me say anything, interrupting me every time and treating me like a child.

Oleksha, 20, trans man,
Saint Petersburg



EVERYONE KEPT SAYING "SHE'LL GET OVER IT" AND DROVE ME DEEP INSIDE MYSELF WITH THIS

09. What can I say? After my coming out¹² in the spring of this year misgendering¹³ and deadnaming began. This is not my first attempt to tell society that in reality I am a guy, not a girl, and that my name is Kai. Since childhood, I have felt like I am not in my body, and my teenage years were filled with dysphoria¹⁴. Everyone kept saying "she'll get over it" and drove me deep inside myself with this.

My father, mother, their spouses, grandparents, best friend. I accepted my feelings and began to defend them in the winter, and came out in the spring. Many people reacted calmly, but the only ones who at least somehow tried to change their attitude were my mother and friends. My little sister keeps saying "well, you're a girl", although I seem like a girl only in proportions and my hair is not short. I face misgendering and deadnaming in the family, college, everywhere. Disdain, although I'm the head of the class, misunderstanding.

My father is a separate story. A man with homophobic views, who yelled at me when I asked for his permission to change my name. "Well, imagine how that will sound?". If he knows that I am open as a trans person, I don't know how it will end. Most likely he'll yell and not accept it or raise his hand against me. In any case, he'll probably only find out about it when I call him from Germany and tell him in a man's voice that he never had a daughter.



12. Coming out is a process when a person voluntarily and openly talks about their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

13. Misgendering is the use of incorrect pronouns and gender endings in relation to a person.

14. Gender dysphoria is the stress that a transgender person experiences due to the discrepancy between their gender identity and the sex assigned at birth.

Total disdain is very scary. I encountered a dismissive attitude and misunderstanding from psychologists. I won't even mention doctors. In all this, the only things that console me are my online friends and thoughts about the future.

Kai, 17, trans man,
Abakan (Republic of Khakassia)



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SHE REPLIED THAT I WON'T FOOL ANYONE

10. The receptionist refused to make an appointment for me because "she can see that I'm a woman."

I was at a doctor's appointment at the clinic, and the doctor asked me to make a second appointment with her through the receptionist. When I approached the receptionist, explained to her that I needed to make an appointment, and showed her my documents, she refused to make an appointment. I asked: "Why?" She replied that I won't fool anyone, and even if I wrote in my passport that I was a man, she would still see that I was a woman.

At that point, I had already passed the commission and changed my gender marker in my documents. But I had not yet been on hormone therapy, and I had a high voice¹⁵.

I argued with her for a long time, despite the fact that the entire clinic was looking at us, and I understood that everyone already realized who I was. In the end, I asked: "Where can I complain about you?" It was stupid to ask, but she answered and gave me the number of the head doctor's office. I went there, explained the situation, and I was lucky that the head doctor was adequate, and she simply made an appointment for me herself.

P, 21, trans guy,
Yekaterinburg



15. With masculinizing hormone therapy, which uses testosterone drugs, the voice usually becomes lower.

11. I went to the psychoneurological dispensary #2 of the Vyborg district of Saint Petersburg, at the very first meeting, the doctor began to manipulate me, devalue my feelings, use different types of psychological violence - all this was done on purpose, with the aim of bringing out my emotions. at the same time, she knew that I was in an acute suicidal state, and I did not want to participate in her "experiments" at all.

she refused to use my pronouns, said that she did not even want to understand this and would not, to which I reacted calmly, since this was an expected situation, but they also refused to change my doctor.

she literally threatened to diagnose me with "transsexualism"¹⁶ (I do not identify myself as 100% transgender, I am non-binary, and this diagnosis may cause me problems). she just wanted to see my reaction. very professional, isn't it?

our dialogues were like this:

- I will address you as it is written in your passport.
- you can address me as you feel more comfortable, I just ask you to respect my comfort level too, since such communication will not encourage me to have a constructive dialogue and further treatment.
- "quietly and angrily looks at me for 5 minutes"
- what is wrong with your local psychiatrist?
- well, he doesn't talk to me and doesn't do anything about my treatment.
- so you've been seeing him for so long and haven't changed your doctor, and you have complaints about me right away! leave all this for your chats and groups, and don't bother me. doesn't want to help himself, but wants to prove something to me.
- I feel devaluation and manipulation from you, I don't feel safe now.
- "quietly and angrily looks at me for 5 minutes"

later this lady prescribed me five drugs, three of which were neuroleptics, and two were phenazepam and haloperidol, drugs that have many side effects and were used for punitive psychiatry. in parallel with the pills, I also received IVs with the same two drugs.

I was so vegetative that I couldn't even open my eyes completely.

16. The International Classification of Diseases, 10th revision (ICD-10) includes the diagnosis F64.0 — "Transsexualism", which was given to transgender individuals and which gave the right to begin a medical transition. After the ban on the transition, it can only be obtained unofficially.

at some point, I apparently got on her nerves with my presence, and she said that I was going to beat someone up with another patient. although our conversation with that patient, which was probably overheard and passed on to her, was about something completely different.

and she, knowing about my terrible and traumatic experience of the previous hospitalization in a psychiatric hospital, put me right there just for fun. of course, I wanted to refuse, but then threats began like "you will sit there for at least six months if you try to refuse", so I had to agree.

and when talking to my mother, she said that "in the next two years, *** will have a rapid deterioration in intellectual functions, and you can safely look for a neuropsychiatric boarding school."

now I am in remission and my psychiatrist says that I just need to finish the year-long course of medications.

tasya, 19, non-binary person,
Saint Petersburg



33 I WAS FORCED TO "EXPLAIN" WHAT I AM DOING IN THE WOMEN'S RESTROOM

12. Even though I had an external pass (I look feminine) and had changed my full name and gender marker, people persistently tried to kick me out of women's restrooms in shopping centers. I also train my voice, that is, when I was forced to "explain" what I am doing in the women's restroom, I did not sound like a man. They called security, but they could do nothing, since everything was ok according to the documents. I tried not to pay attention to such things, but it was terribly unpleasant, especially when there were repeated encounters with the same people.

In an ideal world, there would be no such thing as gender-separated restrooms, and no one's genitals would not be sexualized.

A, 28, non-binary,
city in Zabaikalsky Krai



AS SOON AS I ENTERED A STALL, A SHADOW APPROACHED

13. I work in a shopping center in the city, we don't have a toilet for staff, so I use a public one. In the first year and a half after the start of the HRT, people would consistently pester me at least once a week saying I entered the wrong toilet (usually this happened even more often), but this is too "boring", so I'll tell you about a couple of my favorite cases.

Case 1, September 2024

A crowd of teenagers blocked my way to the toilet and simply refused to let me in.

Case 2, spring 2024

Teenagers again. This time they saw that I entered the stall. They started pounding on it (the other stalls in the toilet were free). This isn't the first time this has happened to me. I waited. I couldn't go to the toilet fearing they will start breaking down the door. They almost broke in, shouting, "Let me take a shit." I waited about twenty minutes. It was quiet. The shadows on the floor disappeared. The noise of footsteps stopped. I went out and washed my hands.

It turned out they were waiting for me near the exit from the toilet. They chased me through the shopping center. Fortunately I was faster, and, unlike them, I know how to maneuver in a crowd. They ran, hooting and shouting, "You're a faggot! You're a faggot, right?!" (Actually I am, but that's none of their business). In the end, I managed to run to the supermarket and hide among the rows. After that, I just went back to work. Fortunately, my boss let me go home when she found out what happened, because she herself is not straight and she is a very understanding woman.

Case 3, winter 2023-2024

And my favorite. The beginning is approximately identical: a man of about 40 tried to block my way into the toilet, I walked past him, demonstratively not paying attention to his presence. As soon as I entered a stall, a shadow approached. At first the man was hammering. Then he called someone. Then everything went quiet and for a long time, five to seven minutes, he just stood opposite the booth where I was standing. His shadow was visible under the door. Then it got scarier: he started taking off his shoes.

He threw one shoe under my door. Where the other one went, I don't know. The sound of a belt. Silence. More movement, again several zealous attempts to enter the stall. The door was still holding. And then vibration: someone was

calling him. He picked up the phone. I don't remember what they were talking about, but I didn't hope for a miracle: I unscrewed the lock down, silently opened it and just slammed the door with all my might on the bastard's face. Or on the head. I have no idea where I hit, but the sound was great. Then I just ran. I don't know what happened to him, but I didn't see any blood anywhere, I doubt I did him any serious harm (which is good, of course).

J, 21, trans man,
Moscow

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LIKE ALL NORMAL PEOPLE, I WANT TO LIVE, NOT SURVIVE

14. After the law banning transition came into force in Russia, my life became a nightmare.

I started having more frequent panic attacks, and my anxiety was getting worse and worse. My friends started worrying about my mental state, and I had to turn to my psychologist. Until that day, I had not come out to her, and my problems were of a completely different nature. She told me that I was just "not like other girls, and that's normal," thereby only worsening my condition.

Because of the law, I lost my already shaky sense of confidence in the future. But this only strengthened my desire to leave the country, because like all normal people, I want to live, not survive.

I turned to my friend who is a psychologist, and he helped me understand myself. Thanks to him, I am writing this text, because in December 2023 I already wrote a farewell letter, and if it weren't for his support, something terrible could have happened.

Since November 2023 my acquaintances have been beating me. They beat me terribly, but so that my face was intact. They threatened me with a knife, said that they would kill me, that I was not a human. They said that they don't beat girls, but if I consider myself a guy, then they will treat me like one. They found it funny. I was scared. I went to the gym and started working out. I was able to stand up for myself, and by February 2024 they left me alone, but they began to threaten me with deanonymization. I didn't react to this, and I was lucky: they got bored of messing with me.

I plan to go abroad as soon as I turn 18. I have already saved up a decent amount of money, but I am terribly scared. I don't want anyone to go through something like this. I feel sorry for people who have gone through this. I really hope that my parents can accept my decision to move. I will leave Russia, but I believe that it will become free.

*Yuri, 17, trans man,
Pskov region*



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THERE IS A CHANCE THAT I WILL NEVER SEE MY FATHER AGAIN

15.

At the end of 2023, the LGBT movement became extremist¹⁶. Because

I am an activist and do not hide, I was forced to leave Russia. I had reasons to worry about my safety and freedom. Our volunteer was imprisoned for 12 years for treason [for a bank transfer of \$10 to support Ukraine - CT]. Now I am forced to live far from home, I miss my friends and my father. There is a chance that I will never see him again and it breaks my heart.

Iona Kosulya, 30, trans girl,
Moscow

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MY HUSBAND CAN DEPRIVE ME OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

16.

I came out as a trans man in my family. My husband did not accept my identity and continues to not accept it. My parents, especially my mother, are the same. They list the following reasons for what is happening to me:

1. I am mentally ill and need help from a psychiatrist.
2. I have been cursed.
3. These are demons forcing me to be a man.

16. On November 30, 2023, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation recognized the non-existent "International LGBT Movement" as an extremist organization. On January 10, 2024, this decision came into force.

4. In fact, I have never loved. If I met a "real man," he would instantly make me a "normal" woman.
5. I am lying because it seems to me that a man has fewer responsibilities, and I just want to work less.
6. These are all my fantasies. It is not possible for a woman to want to become a man, this is all the influence of the West.

I can't get a divorce because we have two children. My husband mentions every time that he can easily deprive me of my parental rights, because now I am promoting LGBT with my mere presence. I can't start HRT, because I don't know how the wider public will react to it, because I have to go to kindergarten. The only thing that saves me is a small community online and a couple of understanding friends who didn't turn away when I came out to them, but supported me. The rest of my life is sheer hell.

Alexey, 33, trans man,
Nizhny Tagil



66 I WAS ACCUSED OF PROPAGANDA AND EXTREMISM

17. The police took me from my home.

On the way to the police station, I tried to ask them why they took me. They didn't really tell me anything, but they started to behave rudely. Politeness changed to a commanding tone: "Answer!" — to my confusion [in response — CT] to the question of who I was dating. After all, one of them said something about my content on the Internet.

I was accused of propaganda and extremism.

To add a surreal touch to the situation, there was this dialogue during the interrogation:

- What is considered propaganda?
- Well, you post photos on VK.
- Face? Just a selfie. Is that enough?
- Yes.
- And if I walk down the street, is that propaganda?
- No, because you're not posting anything.

In the end, I was offered to make a choice. Either I'm accused of everything at once (propaganda, extremism, prostitution, pornography). Or I agree to be a police informer, and then I will have "just a fine" of 100-200 thousand rubles.

Of course, I agreed to "provide sufficient information about LGBT and their meeting places." Under dictation, I wrote a receipt that I undertake to help the police and will not tell anyone about the receipt itself.

Then they took me to their boss, as I understood, to approve me as an informer.

He set a time for me to provide information, namely two weeks.

As soon as I left there, I got home and started packing, not knowing where.

My mother, friends and LGBT organizations helped me. Now I am in Yerevan, I have a passport and a humanitarian visa to France. I will celebrate the New Year there. Everything worked out as well as it could.

Zhanna, 33, trans girl,
Voronezh



88

SECURITY SERVICES REPEATEDLY REJECTED MY DOCUMENTS

18. I quit my job because of low wages and constant delays in salary and immediately began to look for a new job. I did not have any big requirements, but, nevertheless, no one hired me, saying that the security services after checking my documents sent a refusal to accept me for work.

I have no criminal record, no debts, nothing that could prevent me from being hired, but for some reason after changing my documents to female, I was repeatedly rejected by the security services for six months. Because of this I had huge problems with finances and my mental state. I went into introspection, and after talking with psychologists, it turned out that I also had depression as a result of such a hopeless situation.

I was lucky that I had financial support from my parents and was eventually hired, but I shudder to think how many trans people couldn't cope with a similar situation and, without support from their family, which is quite common, lose their homes and end up on the streets without money.

Kristina, 22, trans girl,
Zabaikalsky Krai

89

88

HE WROTE THAT LGBT PEOPLE SHOULD BE KILLED

19. My father wrote to me on VK.

I didn't name my identity directly, but I told him to accept his son and told him that I had a girlfriend (knowing that he would perceive it as a lesbian relationship). In return, I received aggression and statements that he, as a father, could not raise a "normal woman". Before that, several years ago, under my repost of a post about LGBT, he wrote that LGBT people should be killed.

I asked him to stop writing to me, and he blocked me.

I'm afraid that he will attack me and try to maim or kill me if he sees me. I'll get off easy if he just throws a tantrum. Naturally, I would like him to think about it and start to be loyal, ideally accepting me. But I know that won't happen.

Svyat, 20, transmasc genderfluid¹⁷,
Seversk

89

17. Gender fluidity is a non-fixed and constantly fluid gender identity that shifts over time or circumstances.

33

I DON'T WANT TO GET USED TO THIS ATTITUDE AND TAKE IT FOR GRANTED

20. I signed up for a haircut at one hairdresser online. I clearly, as it should be, stated the required service — men's haircut. I came, got my haircut — and the administrator shouted to me in front of the whole room: "WOMEN'S haircut, 500 rubles!" And I was stunned — why women's? I didn't make a scene and silently paid, since the haircut was passable, but a bitter aftertaste remained.

They called me names, raised their voice, edited the entry in my personal account and ripped off more money than originally expected, and all because of my appearance. Such a mixture of transphobia and misogyny¹⁹ in one bottle, help yourself. Only 500 rubles. It doesn't seem like a serious situation, and I may be overdramatizing, but I don't want to get used to this attitude and take it for granted. I don't need someone else to decide for me what service I pay my money for.

D, 20 years old, trans man,
Udmurt Republic

33

33

HE CALLED ME AN ANIMAL AND KICKED ME

21. It was in the park. A guy pestered me, he called me an animal and kicked me hard.

Vera, 25, trans girl,
Saint Petersburg

33

¹⁹ Misogyny is hatred, hostility, or prejudice towards women.

66

OVER 100 REPLIES CAME TO MY COMMENT WITHIN AN HOUR

22. This happened not long ago. I was on social media and came across a video in my feed about a man who was fired from his job as a physical education teacher because of a video of him pole dancing in heels. I found this situation extremely strange, and I left a comment under the post (quote): "I honestly feel sorry for him. It was just a video, it doesn't affect his teaching abilities in any way."

A little context. My avatar had two LGBTQ+ flags: non-binary and radically inclusive gay. I don't hide the fact that I am an LGBTQ+ person.

So, within an hour, my comment received more than 100 responses with the following content: "you, a palette, feel sorry for everyone," "faggots opinion doesn't matter," "isn't your mother ashamed of you?" At first, I didn't understand what these comments were about, and only then did I realize that they were all latching onto the flags on my avatar, calling me a tranny, a palette, a faggot, a transvestite, and so on...



Fip Wagner, 14,
non-binary,
city in Sverdlovsk
Oblast

I WAS EXPELLED FROM THE SCHOOL I HAD BEEN APPLYING TO FOR A YEAR THROUGH A COMPETITIVE SELECTION

23. I entered a private school Letovo in Moscow through a competitive selection (2023-2024 school year). Everything was fine until I decided to reveal my gender identity. I started wearing men's clothes, a cap, and a badge with pronouns. I introduced myself to strangers by my new male name. I asked my classmates to address me in the masculine gender.

Soon, my "right-wing" classmates started bullying me: psychological violence, boycott, provocation with the aim of getting me expelled, they cornered me and tried in every way to ruin my life. I couldn't take it anymore and complained to the administration. Soon I was called in for a talk with the school psychologist, the head of the academic department, the head of educational work, and another person from the administration.

I was threatened with expulsion if I did not immediately stop "this whole circus": stop wearing "male" clothes, responding to a male name, addressing myself in the masculine gender, wearing a badge with pronouns, etc. If I did not comply with the demands, they said, the question of my expulsion would be raised. And if I don't agree, they would not deal with the bullying in any way. I reluctantly agreed, and they had a very lazy conversation with my bullies. The bullying seemed to stop, but the hostility and ridicule from those people remained.

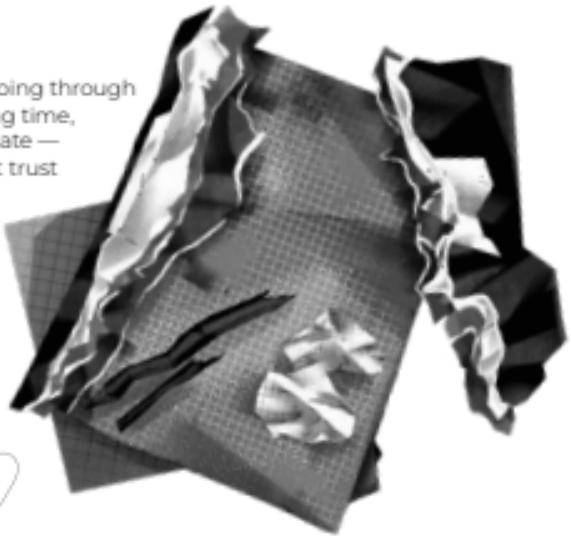
Then I won a place on a school trip to St. Petersburg by writing the best essay. When we met with other guys who got there, they asked how they could address me. I gave them my male name and pronouns. The next day, I was removed from the trip chat, so I met with the administration again. I was told that I was deprived of the right to the trip due to "breach of contract." Yes, because I called myself by a male name. It turns out that one of the organizers heard this.

When the school year was ending and I was preparing for the next one, they called my mother and said that I'm expelled. After a bunch of unanswered letters, they revealed to me the reason - "inappropriate behavior", because "we try to make everyone feel comfortable in our school." I was expelled from the school, where I had been applying to for a year through a competitive selection, because I called myself in the masculine gender, even outside of class.

Then I accidentally learned that the classmates who bullied me were called in for a conversation not to "punish" for bullying me or anything like that. School administration apologized to them and said that "Arseny" was dead and gone,

and "my deadname" was just going through a difficult period in life. For a long time, I was in an incomprehensible state — anger, fear, apathy ... I could not trust people anymore.

Arseniy, 14, trans man,
Moscow



33

I WAS TOLD IN THREE PLACES: "WE HIRE ONLY GIRLS."

24. In January 2024, I went to study on makeup courses, deciding that the beauty industry is the most tolerant place to work. I absolutely did not want to work by my dead name and I looked for a school that could issue the course certificate without the passport name. And I found such a school in my city. When registering, the employees looked at me strangely, and sometimes smiled and exchanged glances, but there was no obvious negativity. Which is not surprising, after all I brought them money.

But during the training, you could forget about tolerance. The teacher not only constantly misgendered me, she constantly emphasized in her speech that I was a man.

"You rarely meet guys in our field, you are the second man in 10 years of my teaching."

"Well, girls have it from the start [the ability/desire to do makeup]."

"Girls can practice on each other, but you'll have to wait, you won't do your own makeup."

There were many such examples. I endured it, completed the courses, and started looking for a job. I called and visited more than 50 beauty salons, and almost everywhere I received a refusal without explanation, in two places they promised to call me back and didn't, and in three places they directly said: "We hire only girls."

I was told the same thing in several sex shops - this was the second most tolerant sphere on my personal list. In one salon I couldn't stand it: "But I am a girl, look at me, I'm not a man!" And in response I heard: "We hire BIOLOGICAL GIRLS."

In the end I despaired to get a job in a beauty salon or sex shop, I decided to sell cosmetics. And as soon as I thought about it, LGBT employees are being fired from large chain cosmetics stores because of the management's fear of the law on extremism. Surely the most extreme extremists are boys with makeup who sell powder and lipstick.

I had to stick my certificate and my new skills up and went to work as a delivery worker under a dead name. I worked until Kushnerik (anti-gender activist and police informer — CT) came to me with his denunciations. His threats helped me get out of the swamp, and I fled to Georgia.

Now I work in Tbilisi in a completely "unfeminine" job: I drive a huge van and sometimes unload it. But all the employees call me Dari and treat me like a girl, although they have seen my documents and know my dead name. I hope discrimination in my life has ended.

Dari, 27, trans girl,
Southern Federal District



I'M NOT SCARED BECAUSE THEY WANT US TO BE SCARED

25. The situation happened at my school when I was finishing 10th grade.

A new headmistress came to us and turned it into a gymnasium, intending to introduce a strict school uniform. By that time, I had been hatching the idea of coming there in a skirt for a long time (I am AMAB²⁰), and this situation became an incentive for me. I found the best skirt, came to school, sat for 15 minutes in the first lesson, catching bulging eyes the size of a watermelon, questions like: "What are you, a f***t?" and theories that I just lost a bet to someone.

After that I was called into the headmistress's office, who swore at me, gasped and groaned. The head of the educational department was also sitting there, and she tried to talk to me sensibly. In the end, I agreed to their demands to change into pants and calmly studied for the rest of the day. It is worth clarifying that my friends and good queer acquaintances supported me and helped reduce stress. It was Thursday, on Friday I went to school just as calmly.

However, on the weekend my mother received a call that I was being expelled. Allegedly for poor academic performance (though I was doing well) and absences (they were all due to illness). However, they suggested that I stay in school, just under no circumstances do anything like that and not express my political position (I repeatedly drew the Ukrainian flag and the white-blue-white flag [used by Russians to protest the war in Ukraine — CT] all over the board). In general, I should be under the radar and keep quiet. I refused deciding to finish my secondary education in college.

After that, former students of that school repeatedly shouted at me on the street. Also, a year before there were scandals about my painted nails, but there were just phrases like: "Remove it immediately!" And when the next day nothing was removed, they did not bother me.

I am not scared, because they want us to be scared. I just know that my boyfriend (also a trans person) and I will cope. If we have to fight, we will fight. If we can run away, we will run away. We both have come a long way in communicating with our parents and now, fortunately, there is acceptance and support from their side. We are slowly and carefully, but seriously planning to emigrate.

May, 18, non-binary,
Moscow region, Lyubertsy urban district



20. AMAB — a person with the male gender assigned at birth.



IT WAS THE WORST FEELING I HAVE EVER HAD

26. It's not going to be easy to share this story, but I think it will be important for others. It happened when I was a first-year student. I was placed in a dorm. It just so happened that I shared a room with a person who preferred male pronouns and had the same sexual orientation. We started getting to know each other and gradually got along with each other, talking purely among ourselves about LGBT. Someone started spreading rumors about us, that we were supposedly dating, and wondering why my neighbor was using the "wrong" pronouns.

It was night, about 11-12 o'clock, we were all already asleep, when the teacher burst into our room and very sternly said that she was calling me and him to her office one after the other. We were scared and couldn't understand why exactly, because we behaved well in the dorm and didn't bother anyone.

First I went to her office, not even suspecting that inside there will be a hell of homophobia and transphobia. She started asking about my parents, whether they are well or not, then she pointed out that according to rumors, my roommate and I are lesbians and allegedly have a special relationship, almost kissing passionately right in college. In fact, it was an interrogation, and then she threatened that such people would be kicked out of the dorm. I had to hide myself, it was very scary. But then, when they called my roommate, it got much worse. Before that, they seriously asked me why he uses such pronouns? To which I answer that I do not know. I was forced by manipulation to call him myself so that I would not tell him anything. It was obvious from my appearance that everything was not okay.

We were sitting next to each other. The teacher asked personal questions in a rude manner - about family, about relationships. Then transphobia and brainwashing began.

They were telling us that we should be cis girls. Because they are the norm, and we should be normal. All this time they were pressuring us and asking us to tell the truth, to trust them.

They started asking the roommate. He admitted that he was used to speaking with he/him pronouns and that he didn't feel like a guy or a girl, and neither did I.

And then it was a wild horror. They kept telling us that we were girls, normal girls, beautiful girls. My roommate and I started having severe gender dysphoria, he started crying, and I endured until the very end to not burst into tears. It's a disgusting feeling when you are told to be like this, but you can't be like that *a priori*. Because your sense of self doesn't match with your body. And you are

sick inside, but you are absolutely powerless.

They instilled in us how we absolutely had to put on make-up and dresses/skirts, because we were girls, and so on. The atmosphere inside was so oppressive and scary for us, we were really intimidated. We started to smile through the pain, to nod along, to explain that it all was just jokes and self-expression.

It was the worst feeling I have ever had. After that, we went to the room and cried for several hours. I was literally sick from the teacher's words, from the strong dysphoria, from the fact that they were rudely trying to shove us into these frames. We felt unsafe, that we were not welcome here, that everybody was eavesdropping here, and our personal life or rumors would be passed on to the teachers. The next day, already in the classroom, I cried in an embrace with a friend who knows about my gender identity and accepts it.

Now we no longer live in this dorm, I was able to move out and forget about this story for a while. And I hope that it can help someone. Be careful and take care of yourself!

Chris, 17, genderqueer,
Omsk



22

I LEFT MOST OF MY LIFE THERE, IN THE HOMELAND THAT EXPELLED ME

27. I lived in Russia, in Moscow, for 29 years. I managed to visit only five cities in the whole country (though I was planning to visit many more). I wanted to live in St. Petersburg for a month to fully experience the city's peculiarities, some of which I had noticed during business trips. But my plans were abruptly and swiftly cut short by my flight from the country. I was forced to urgently emigrate from the Russian Federation due to the last nail driven into the coffin - the recognition of the "International LGBT Movement" as extremist. Oh, if only it had existed! I left, having packed up in a few days and taking with me only a backpack and a suitcase in my hand luggage. I left most of my life there, in the homeland that expelled me.

I considered migrating to another country at some point in the future. For a warm climate, for a broader experience of life on Earth and, of course, for an adequate policy towards LGBT. But by the time I had to buy one-way tickets, I was completely unprepared.

For 13 years now, I have been and remain a rather daring, adventurous activist. I am an open LGBT person, sharing my experience in my blogs. It is

fundamentally important for me to bring out the truth and visibility of acute social issues. Of course, this has a downside, which I have been well aware of all this time — multiple risks and even threats.

I expectedly encountered them. Both government pressure, tightening the screws until the threads break, and cyberbullying from the people. A certain far-right group (or several?) raided my social networks with threats to health and life, insults, misgendering and even deadnaming. Yes, they got my personal data (including passport data), found some outdated information and leaked it all to the Internet.

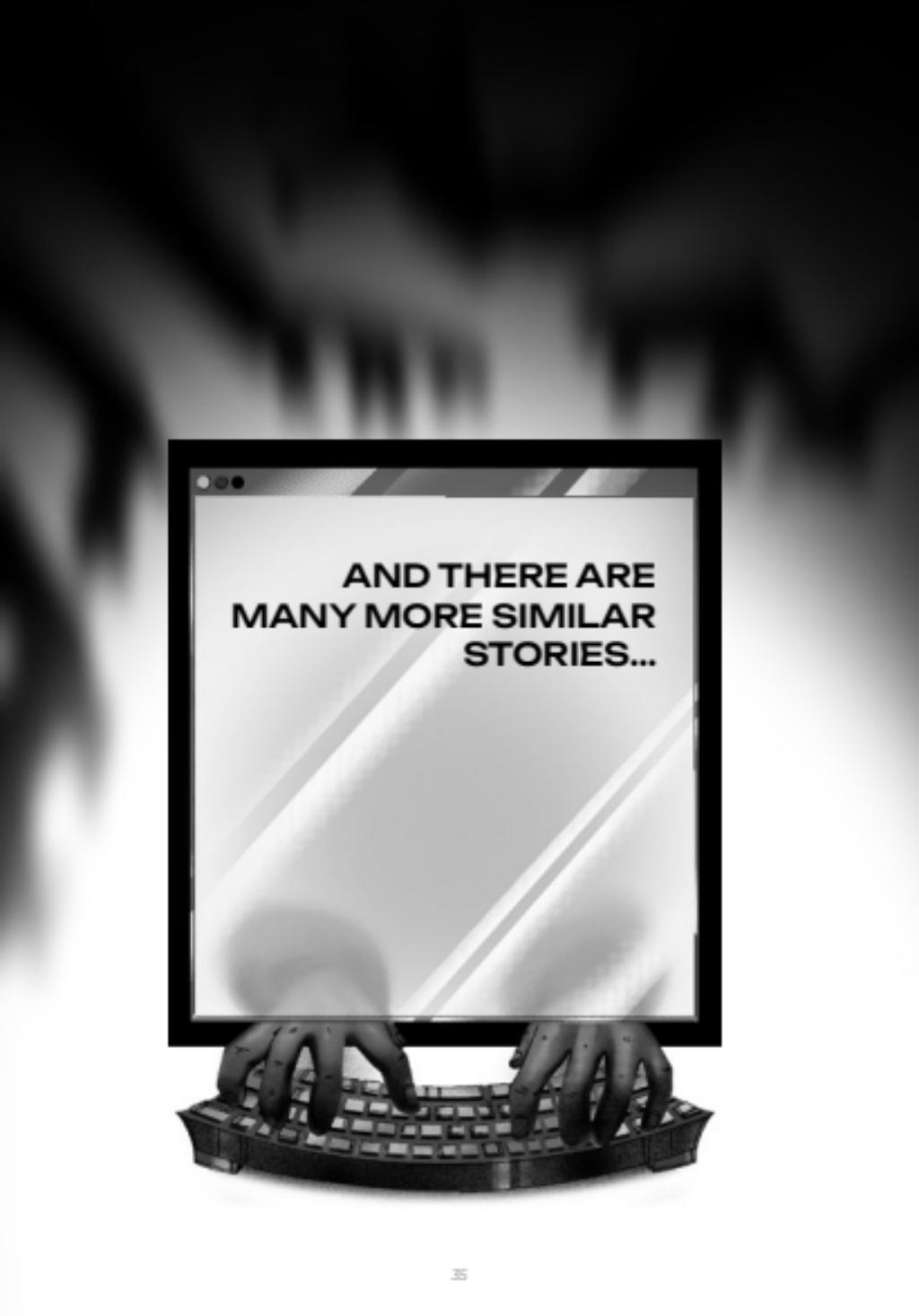
I have encountered them offline, too. I was one of those who was attacked with pepper spray by the ultra-right at the courthouse where the case concerning Center T was being conducted. Before that, they had been threatening us en masse, publishing the preparations for the attack in their channels. Some of them even got into private messages to some of us. The photo showed a whole combat kit: several gas canisters, a hammer and even a fire extinguisher (for blows?). And the sweet anticipation of attack, of course, was there too.

The question is, who of us is really an extremist? I/we, who live absolutely peacefully, simply wanting to realize their basic (I emphasize) human rights, or groups of people who deliberately exterminate our minority with targeted cyberbullying, data leaks and physical aggression? And government officials too, who have even greater power to destroy those they don't like.

Maxim Goldman, 30, non-binary (polygender²¹) transmasculine person,
Russia (mainly Moscow)



21. A polygender is a non-binary person who identifies with multiple gender identities (usually four or more).



AND THERE ARE
MANY MORE SIMILAR
STORIES...

THIS ZINE WAS CREATED THANKS TO CENTER T'S MONITORING OF DISCRIMINATION AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF INDIVIDUAL ACTIVISTS.

Our mission is to create conditions for a decent life for transgender people in Russia in terms of mental, economic and physical well-being, as well as to form a united Russian-speaking trans community capable of resisting oppression.

In November 2023, after the Russian Supreme Court recognized the "International LGBT Movement" as extremist, part of the Center T team was forced to urgently evacuate from the country. Despite the personal losses associated with this, this allows us to help those who remain in Russia.

Currently, Center T continues to work on 25 projects. Their main areas are:

- access to medical care;
- community strengthening;
- assistance in crisis situations, including assistance in emergency evacuation from the country;
- shelter for transgender people;
- educational and advocacy work.

Repressions are intensifying every month, and our work is becoming more and more difficult. After November 30, 2023, we lost the ability to accept donations from Russia, as this would jeopardize the safety of our donors. Now we can only receive donations from a foreign card or in cryptocurrency.

SUPPORT US!

There are other ways to help: for example, tell about us in your social media (if you are not in Russia and it is safe for you), become an ally of trans people or offer cooperation.



WE THANK THOSE WHO TOOK PART IN THE WORK ON THE ZINE:

Yulia (layout), Aida (illustrations), Valto (editing and selection of stories), Anita (translation into English), Sasha (introduction and production), and everyone who shared their story with us.

We know that remembering painful events again can be very difficult and scary. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to learn about what happened to you and to express support, including through this zine.

We are sure that even in Russia there can be laws protecting LGBT people from discrimination, and a police force that will work to enforce them and our safety. To make this possible, we need to, among other things, collect evidence of human rights violations that are happening every day now. Thank you!

If you want to leave a response, ask a question or collaborate, write to us: info@centre-t.ru

Subscribe to our social networks and follow the news:



With warmth,
your Center T

NEW MESSAGE

Anti-gender activists have spammed our monitoring form with insults. We are publishing some of these messages to show what trans people face in Russia — intolerance, which can result in persecution at the legislative level.



Hicksville, faggots



Killed thousands of LGBT representatives



Beaten up a couple of faggots because they are faggots, and they also love Ukes ☺



They created me like an airplane and told me that I should fly with a bunch of people



Our fleet carried out a planetary bombardment and wiped off the face of the earth all the cities of pathetic homosexuals heretics



Trans whores



20 n***** tore an asshole, took a month to stitch up



They called me a pylon after I blinked my tail lights at the minibus driver



Faggots have happened

